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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
National Foreign Assessment Center

REF # 7065-79

26 December 1979

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Capabilities and Requirements of the
Afghan Insurgents

1. Afghan insurgents would be unlikely to survive concentrated counterinsurgency operations conducted by Soviet combat troops, particularly those operations that involved heavy air support. Under such an assault, the insurgents would probably fade into the mountains or in some areas retreat over the border into Pakistan or, to a lesser extent, Iran. As in the government offensive in Paktia Province in October, however, the rebels would return unless the Soviets remained in the area in force. [REDACTED]

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2. In any case, the rebels would be likely to continue to ambush isolated Soviet or Afghan units and to harass outlying garrisons that were not manned by Soviet forces. They would probably also increase terrorist attacks inside major cities, especially against Soviet personnel, and attempt to disrupt the economy by sabotaging power plants and light industry. [REDACTED]

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3. If the Soviets decided only to protect major cities and airfields, they could easily thwart insurgent assaults with air attacks and long-range artillery. Under these conditions, the Soviets would have effective political control over Afghanistan, but the insurgents would own the countryside. Only if a large Afghan Army unit with its weapons joined the rebels and directed rebel operations could the insurgents take over a government garrison. [REDACTED]

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4. We have little evidence on the number of insurgents, the amount of weapons they have, or their need for additional equipment. They have captured significant amounts of rifles, mortars, antiaircraft weapons, ammunition, and occasional tanks and armored personnel carriers from retreating or deserting Afghan troops and by ambushing supply convoys. They also obtain

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weapons through Pakistan. Tribal groups in Pakistan--largely immune to government laws--sell locally manufactured rifles and a variety of heavier weapons that could be used against aircraft and tanks. In addition, the arms dealers sell imported weapons or those stolen from the Afghan or Pakistan armies. [REDACTED]

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5. With increased Soviet involvement in the insurgency, however, the opportunities for capturing Army weapons and ammunition may be severely curtailed. As a result, the insurgents will have to rely more heavily on the black market, where prices are sure to rise. There are indications that the price of ammunition in Pakistan is already becoming prohibitively expensive. [REDACTED]

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6. The insurgents almost certainly would seek to avoid pitched battles with Soviet or Soviet-led forces, but to engage them the rebels would require heavy weapons. They would especially need effective antiaircraft and antitank weapons. The most practical would be man-portable, easy to operate weapons [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The insurgents also have a continuing need for money, medical supplies, food, and clothing. [REDACTED]

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